

Issue NE-CW0104, released January 5, 2004, by the Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. For more information contact us at: 100 Centennial Mall North, Suite 298, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-437-5541, e-mail at [nass-ne@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass-ne@nass.usda.gov), Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.

**Agricultural Summary:** For the month of December 2003, weather conditions were generally mild and quite favorable for livestock condition and care. Minimal moisture for cover and for spring growth remains a concern of wheat producers, according to the USDA's Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service. The state continued to be rated in extreme drought in the major wheat producing areas of the west. Producer activities included farm maintenance and livestock care.

This release is based on reports and data from FSA county directors, county extension educators, NOAA, and the High Plains Climate Center. Current county specific comments plus current and historic PDF files of Weather and Crop reports can be found at: [http://www.nass.usda.gov/ne/cropwthr/cmts\\_cur.htm](http://www.nass.usda.gov/ne/cropwthr/cmts_cur.htm)

**Weather Summary:** Statewide, depth of snow at the end of December averaged two tenths of an inch with snow cover reported in the Northwest, East Central, and South Central Districts. December temperatures averaged well above normals the first, third, and fourth weeks and below normals the second week of the month.

**Field Crops Report:** **Wheat** condition declined this past month and rated 11 percent very poor, 17 poor, 36 fair, 35 good, and 1 excellent. This is nearly equal to last year's condition of 38 percent good or excellent. Precipitation since planting continued well below normal in the Southwest, Central, and South Central districts. **Hay and forage** supplies were mostly adequate to surplus statewide. Last month's open weather allowed producers to utilize stalk residue and limit the feeding of hay supplies.

**Livestock, Pasture, and Range Report:** **Cattle and calves** condition rated 12 percent fair, 65 good, and 23 excellent. Stalk fields were providing excellent grazing potential, with limited supplemental feeding occurring.

**The following are comments from Nebraska's FSA County Executive Directors and county Extension Educators:**

#### ***NORTHWEST***

DAWES: We have some snow on the ground. Cattle are in good condition and hay supplies are good.

#### ***NORTH CENTRAL***

HOLT/BOYD: The winter has been easy on livestock. There has been little snow and temperatures have been generally mild.

#### ***NORTHEAST***

ANTELOPE: Weather conditions have been good. Temperatures have been above normal with no snow cover. Producers were able to have cattle in corn stalks with little supplemental feeding occurring. Because of the "Mad Cow" report, some producers may hold on to feeder calves to see if the market will increase.

BURT: The mild weather conditions have allowed cattle to remain on stalks and preserve hay supplies.

THURSTON: Cattle stocker-feeder producers have been able to utilize stock fields throughout the month. Conservation work has been able to proceed with only 1-2 inches of ground frost to contend with.

#### ***CENTRAL***

BUFFALO: Buffalo County is very dry. We need a significant amount of moisture.

DAWSON: A mild winter has been the rule so far. We do need moisture before the next cropping season. Open fields are yielding abundant roughage for cattle; thus even more downward pressure on alfalfa prices.

#### ***EAST CENTRAL***

COLFAX: Generally, still dryer than normal conditions. Overall weather conditions have been favorable for livestock, fall field work, and general farm maintenance.

DODGE: The weather has been mild and great for livestock. Producers are ordering seed and getting livestock on to corn stalks.

NANCE/BOONE: Milder temperatures with little snow has helped livestock utilize stock fields to full potential. Hay stocks are in good shape at this point.

YORK: Mild weather allowed field work to be done up to January 2. Cattle making good use of harvested corn, milo, and soybean fields.

#### ***SOUTHWEST***

CHASE: Very dry and warm for this time of year. The wheat is in poor shape and in need of snow cover.

FRONTIER: The extreme dry conditions are still with us. There is a lot of concern about winter kill in wheat. The cattle continue to graze in cornfields and feed supplies remain good. However many cattlemen are worried about no moisture for the rangeland.

HAYES/HITCHCOCK: Need moisture. Wheat is in poor condition. Needs moisture and cover to keep it from blowing out.

#### ***SOUTH CENTRAL***

HARLAN: The weather has been mild and very dry. Livestock were gleaning fields and very little supplemental feeding was being done.

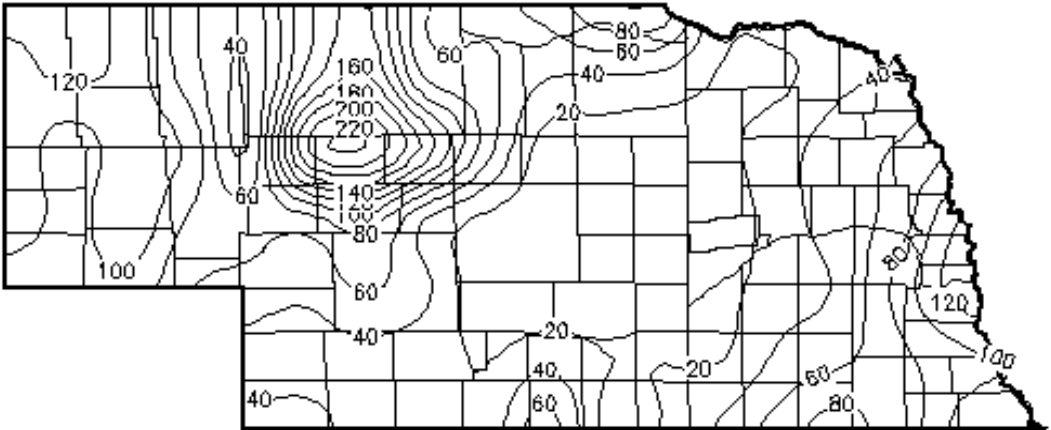
WEBSTER: Subsoil moisture is relatively nonexistent and pasture ponds have no water. Wheat is suffering due to lack of moisture and no snow cover.

#### ***SOUTHEAST***

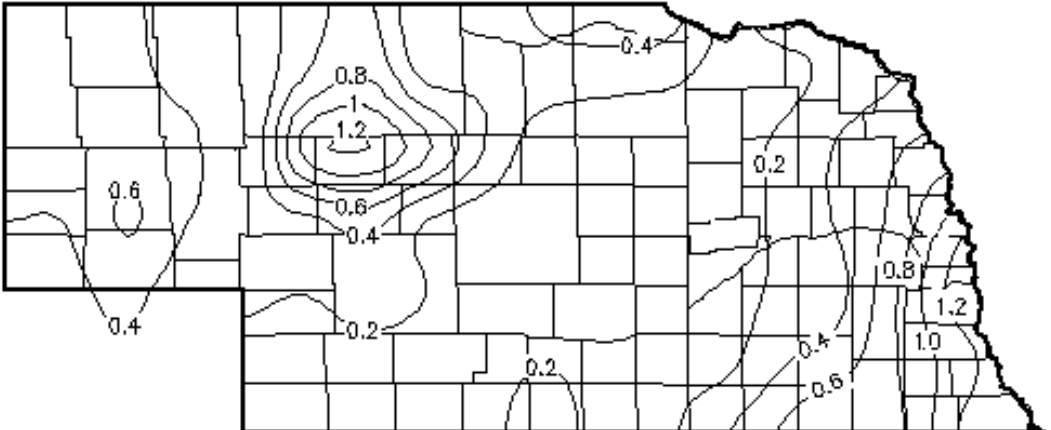
JEFFERSON: Weather has been very mild. Cattle were out on stalks enabling farmers to reduce the feeding of hay. Area could use some moisture.

PAWNEE: BSE shock has really hit a lot of producers, more calves than usual were being backgrounded rather than sold earlier. Double whammy of not getting in on good cattle prices and expecting the extra cattle income to help on the poorer feed grain yields.

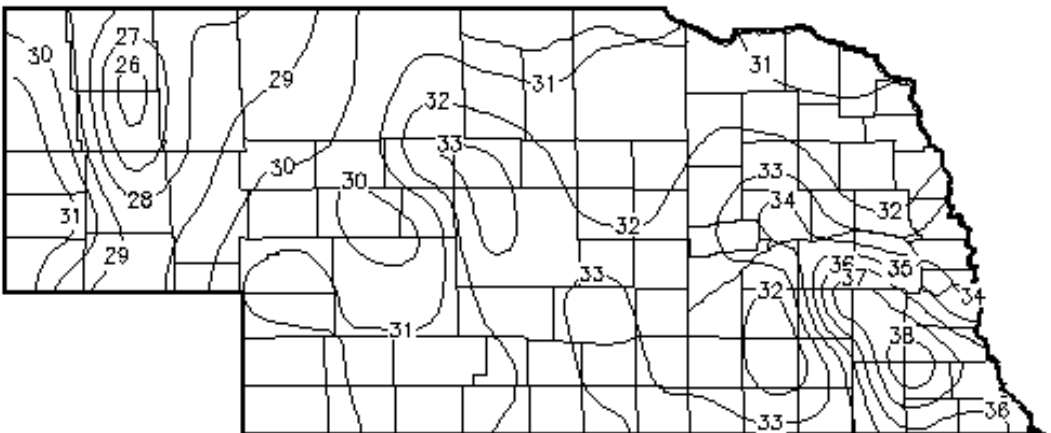
PRECIPITATION AS PERCENT OF NORMAL FOR DECEMBER 2003<sup>1</sup>



PRECIPITATION IN INCHES FOR MONTH OF DECEMBER 2003<sup>1</sup>



SEVEN DAY AVERAGE TEMPERATURE AT THE FOUR INCH DEPTH UNDER BARE SOIL<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: High Plains Regional Climate Centers Automated Weather Data Network (AWDN).